

REMARKS

This Amendment responds to the Office Action mailed December 20, 2005 in the above-identified application. For the following reasons, careful reconsideration and allowance of the application are respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 2, 6-8, 10-13, 15-20, 24-26 and 28 were previously pending in the application. By this amendment, claims 13 and 15 are cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Accordingly, claims 1, 2, 6-8, 10-12, 16-20, 24-26 and 28 are pending for examination, with claims 1, 16 and 28 being independent claims.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 2, 6-8, 11, 12, 16 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by Hecht et al (U.S. 6,507,231). Claims 10, 13, 15, 17 and 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Hecht et al. in view of Kardash (U.S. 6,137,329). Claim 20 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Hecht et al. in view of Kardash and further in view of Lau et al. (U.S. 5,146,159). Claims 18 and 24-26 are indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form. The rejections are respectfully traversed.

The Examiner has noted that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) based on the Hecht patent might be overcome either by a showing under 37 C.F.R. §1.132 that any invention disclosed but not claimed in the reference was derived from the inventor of this application and thus is not an invention “by another”, or by an appropriate showing under 37 C.F.R. §1.131. Applicant has elected not to make a showing under 37 C.F.R. §1.131 or §1.132 at this time because the Hecht patent does not disclose the subject matter of the present claims. However, Applicant reserves the right to present a showing under 37 C.F.R. §1.131 or §1.132, should the need arise.

The Hecht patent discloses a driver circuit. However, the driver circuit disclosed in the Hecht patent does not include the features recited in Applicant’s claims.

Claim 1 is directed to a method for operating a driver circuit, comprising operating the driver circuit at full power in a dynamic mode, and operating the driver circuit at reduced power in a

termination mode, wherein *operating the driver circuit at reduced power comprises reducing the slew current for an output stage of the driver current*, further comprising maintaining an idle current for the output stage at a constant level in the dynamic mode and in the termination mode.

The Hecht patent does not teach or suggest a driver circuit wherein a slew current for an output stage of the driver circuit is reduced in a termination mode. As shown in Fig. 3 of the Hecht patent, the driver circuit includes a positive slew current source 29A and a negative slew current source 29B, both of which are constant current sources. By contrast, a mode control circuit for reducing slew current in the termination mode, according to an embodiment of the invention, is illustrated in Figs. 2 and 3 of the present application and is described at page 8, line 14 to page 9, line 17 of the specification. As described, the slew current may be reduced by a factor of about 10, for example, when the circuit is switched from the dynamic mode to the termination mode. This feature is not disclosed or suggested in the Hecht patent and reduces power consumption. As discussed above, the Hecht patent discloses constant slew currents. Accordingly, claim 1 is clearly and patentably distinguished over the Hecht patent.

Claims 2, 6-8 and 10-12 depend from claim 1 and are patentable over the Hecht patent for at least the same reasons as claim 1.

Claim 16 is directed to a driver circuit for use in automatic test equipment, comprising an output circuit operable in a dynamic mode and in a termination mode, and a mode control circuit for supplying a first current to the output circuit in the dynamic mode and for supplying a second current to the output circuit in the termination mode in response to a mode select signal. The mode control circuit is configured to reduce a slew current for the output circuit in the termination mode and to maintain an idle current for the output circuit at a constant level in the dynamic mode and in the termination mode.

As discussed above in connection with claim 1, the Hecht patent does not disclose or suggest a mode control circuit configured to reduce a slew current for output circuit in the termination mode, as claimed. Accordingly, claim 16 is clearly and patentably distinguished over the Hecht patent.

Claims 17-19 depend from claim 16 and are patentable over the Hecht patent for at least the same reasons as claims 1 and 16.

Claim 28 is directed to a method for operating a driver circuit in automatic test equipment, comprising operating an output circuit of the driver circuit in a dynamic mode and in a termination mode in response to a mode select signal, supplying a first current to the output circuit in the dynamic mode, supplying a second current to the output circuit in a termination mode, wherein the first current is larger than the second current, and maintaining an idle current for the output circuit at a constant level in the dynamic mode and in the termination mode.

As discussed above, the Hecht patent does not disclose or suggest supplying a reduced current to the output circuit in the termination mode. For these reasons and for the reasons discussed above in connection with claims 1 and 16, claim 28 is clearly patentable over the Hecht patent.

Based upon the above discussion, claims 1, 2, 6-8, 10-12, 16-20, 24-26 and 28 are in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

A Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested. The Examiner is requested to call the undersigned at the telephone number listed below if this communication does not place the case in condition for allowance.

If this response is not considered timely filed and if a request for an extension of time is otherwise absent, Applicant hereby requests any necessary extension of time. If there is a fee occasioned by this response, including an extension fee, that is not covered by an enclosed check, please charge any deficiency to Deposit Account No. 23/2825.

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Respectfully submitted,

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